

Electricity Act 1989

Tealing to Kintore Upgrade TRL-120-1

COMMUNITY HEARING STATEMENT BY ROBERT MELVILLE

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would also like to recognise Angus Council for having the courage to reject this proposal, allowing this enquiry to take place.

I am here because I fundamentally object to this application. In my view, it is the wrong proposal for Scotland—technically, environmentally, and strategically.

By way of background, I live in Echt, and before that I spent my life in Aberdeen, working as a Chartered Engineering Manager in the subsea industry. So, you could say I'm a "toonser" who supports economic growth, but I also firmly believe in fairness, integrity, and the need for a robust business case in decision-making.

I would like to address my concerns under three main topics.

Firstly, from a technical perspective. This proposal relies on overhead transmission technology that is, in essence, over a century old. While it remains widely used, it is also widely recognised as one of the most visually intrusive forms of infrastructure. Across Europe, there is an increasing expectation that projects of this scale properly evaluate less damaging alternatives—particularly underground or offshore solutions—especially in sensitive landscapes. Yet in this case, no robust, transparent comparison has been presented. Crucially, there has been no meaningful cost-benefit analysis made available to the public that clearly sets out the long-term impacts on consumers or communities across the range of potential options. Nor has there been an independent socio-economic assessment that properly weighs the broader consequences of this development. This leads many to reasonably conclude that the preference for overhead lines is driven primarily by short-term cost considerations rather than long-term public interest.

Secondly, the environmental impact. The scale and permanence of this infrastructure cannot be overstated. These structures will fundamentally alter landscapes that have, until now, remained largely unspoiled. Scotland's countryside is not simply scenery—it is part of our national identity, our wellbeing, and our economy. It supports agriculture, tourism, biodiversity, and community life. Once infrastructure of this nature is installed, the impact is effectively irreversible. We must ask ourselves: what value do we place on these landscapes, and how far are we willing to industrialise them?

Thirdly, the strategic context. What is most concerning is the apparent absence of a coherent, integrated energy strategy underpinning developments of this scale. Instead, what we are seeing increasingly resembles a piecemeal approach—where individual applications are brought forward in isolation, without a clear, transparent framework that demonstrates how they collectively serve Scotland's long-term needs. This risks turning parts of our country into corridors of infrastructure, without communities ever being given a complete picture of what lies ahead. That cannot be described as a "just transition." A just transition must be planned, balanced, and fair—not something that happens *to* communities, but something shaped *with* them. There is also a broader question: are we building infrastructure proportionate to Scotland's actual needs, or are we enabling developments whose impacts will be borne locally while the benefits are distributed elsewhere?

Finally, I would like to address process and fairness. I have serious concerns about how this application has been progressed. The consultation process, in my view, has fallen short of the standards expected under

established principles of meaningful public engagement. Communities should be involved at a formative stage, not simply presented with largely fixed proposals. It is also deeply concerning that interdependent elements—such as substations and overhead lines—can be progressed through separate applications. That approach makes it more difficult for decision-makers and the public to fully understand the cumulative impacts of what is, in reality, a single integrated project. Many members of the community have invested significant time and effort in raising legitimate concerns—on matters ranging from public health to construction impacts—yet it appears that not all of this material has been given full consideration within this process. That risks undermining confidence, not only in this application, but in the system itself.

In closing, I would urge you to reflect carefully on the nature of the decision before you. This is not a temporary or easily reversible choice. Once taken, its consequences will endure for generations.

I ask that you listen not only to those directly affected, but also to those who recognise the wider implications of this proposal. There *are* alternative approaches—approaches that can meet our energy and climate objectives without causing lasting damage to the landscapes and communities we value so deeply.

To proceed as proposed would not, in my view, represent a just transition for Scotland.

Thank you.

ROBERT MELVILLE
8 May 2026